



SOLOMON ISLANDS

SUMMARY

The Solomon Islands is a constitutional monarchy with three tiers of government: national, provincial and local. The constitution specifically mentions sub-national government and the main legislative texts for local government include the Local Government Act 1996, Provincial Government Act 1997 and Honiara City Act 1999. The Minister for Provincial Government has responsibility for the nine provinces, while the Minister for Home Affairs has responsibility for all other local government including Honiara. Following the 2014 local elections 2.4% of councillors were women and in 2013/14 local government accounted for 1.8% of total government expenditure. Honiara is currently the only established local government; it is empowered to raise local revenue through property rates, business tax and fees for services or licences. Honiara City Council has sole responsibility for trade, business licences and waste management, and shares responsibility with the provincial and national governments for the regulation and conservation of the environment, public roads maintenance, drainage, education and medical services.

1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

The Solomon Islands is a constitutional monarchy with a unicameral parliament.^{41.1a} The head of state is HM Queen Elizabeth II, represented by a governor-general recommended by parliament. The governor-general holds office for a term of five years. The national parliament comprises 50 members elected for a four-year term under a first-past-the-post system in single-member constituencies. Following the 2014 national election, 2.0% (1/50) of MPs were women.^{41.1b} The head of government is the prime minister, who appoints a cabinet of 23 from the members of parliament. The Solomon Islands is quasi-federal and the Provincial Government Act 1997 (the 'PGA'), governs the nine provincial governments. The number of members in each provincial assembly varies according to population, but all members are elected for a four-year term under the first-past-the-post system and each assembly is headed by a premier indirectly elected by the members. The Minister for Provincial Government administers the PGA.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

The constitution^{41.2a} specifically mentions sub-national government and makes provision for the nine provinces and the City of Honiara.

2.2 Main legislative texts

The specific Acts governing local government are:

- Local Government Act 1996 (Cap. 117)^{41.2b}
- The Provincial Government Act 1996^{41.2c}
- the Honiara City Act 1999^{41.2d}
- Town and Country Planning Act 1997^{41.2d}
- Public Finance and Management Act 2013

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

There are currently no proposed legislative changes.

2.4 National urban policy

There are plans to develop an urban policy; however the government is first working on an urban profile to inform the policy.

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state

The Local Government Act 1996 (Cap. 117) (the 'LGA') allows the Minister for Home Affairs to establish local government councils and provides for councils' powers and functions; however, at present there are no councils established under this Act. Honiara City Council is currently the only local government body in the Solomon Islands, and was established under the separate Honiara City Act 1999 (the 'HCA').

3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Minister for Home Affairs administers both the LGA and the HCA. The HCA gives the minister various powers relating to oversight of the council, including:

- appointing four out of the 20 council members
- assenting to council ordinances
- dissolving the council if it is not fulfilling its functions
- transferring certain functions under national legislation to the council
- appointing standing committee members on the mayor's advice
- approving certain borrowing, lending and investment activities.

3.3 Council types

Honiara City Council (HCC) is currently the only established local government. The HCA requires Honiara to establish a minimum of seven standing committees.



KEY FACTS

POPULATION (2018 estimate):
667,044

AREA (UN 2016):
28,896 sq km

CAPITAL:
Honiara

CURRENCY:
Solomon Islands dollar (SBD)

HEAD OF STATE:
HM Queen Elizabeth II

GOVERNOR-GENERAL:
Sir Frank Kabui

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:
Prime Minister Rick Houenipwela

FORM OF GOVERNMENT:
constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:
unicameral

STATE STRUCTURE:
unitary

LANGUAGES:
English (official)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: Nov 2014, turnout: 89.3%; next: 2019

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2014):
2.0%

LOCAL ELECTIONS:
last: Dec 2014, turnout: na; next: 2019

WOMEN COUNCILLORS (2016):
2.4%

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2015/16:
2.4%

Table 41.1a Distribution of councils and population

Province	Provincial Councils	Local government	Population (2009 Census)	Population (2018 est)	% rural (2009 Census)
Central/ National	1	na	26,051	31,732	0
Choiseul	1	na	26,372	35,030	100
Guadalcanal	1	Honiara City	158,222	231,121	0
Isabel	1	na	26,158	33,843	100
Makira and Ulawa	1	na	40,419	52,880	100
Malaita	1	na	137,596	158,076	99
Renell and Bellona	1	na	3,041	4,026	95
Temotu	1	na	21,362	24,757	100
Western	1	na	76,649	95,579	99
TOTAL	9	1	515,870	667,044	80.3

Source: 2009 Census^{41.3a} and Projected population by province 2010 - 2025^{41.3b}

The HCA further states that the executive powers of those committees are limited to those delegated in writing from the mayor, and cannot include powers to borrow money, set a rate or tax, make ordinances or execute a contract. There are currently ten standing committees mirroring the operational divisions of the council, but their powers are limited to researching options and making recommendations to council. The HCA also gives the council powers to form ad-hoc committees for special purposes.

3.3.1 Provincial governments: There are nine (known as assemblies), established under the PGA. Each provincial government has a provincial assembly, and a number of wards determined by population size. The assembly is made up of a premier (the head), an executive which is responsible for various portfolios of services, and ordinary members, who are elected representatives from the wards. The main role of the provincial assembly is to make ordinances, set policies and deliver services to the rural population. The provincial government's administration structure comprises both seconded officers from the national government, headed by a provincial secretary, and provincial direct employees.

3.3.2 Honiara City Council: is headed by a city mayor and his/her executives, who make up two-thirds of councillors. Similarly to provincial assemblies, each councillor represents a ward. The key role of the mayor and his/her councillors is to make by-laws within their legal remit and to ensure services are delivered to the urban population of Honiara City in an effective and efficient manner.

3.3.3 Local councils (incl. town councils)

These can in principle be established by the Minister for Home Affairs, but none are currently established.

3.3.4 Area councils: have been suspended since 1997, but in principle may be constituted by provincial assemblies.

3.3.5 Area committees: may in principle be appointed by local councils.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections

The current Honiara City Council members were elected on 17 December 2014. The most recent provincial elections were on 10 December 2014, in six out of nine provinces. Candidates for election are not normally aligned with particular political parties.^{41.4}

4.2 Voting system

In Honiara City Council, members are elected for a four-year term under the first-past-the-post system. The council is headed by a mayor indirectly elected by the councillors. In provincial councils, the single-ballot box system has been used since 2010. Previously there was a separate box for each candidate and voters were not required to mark their ballot. The 2010 provincial elections were the first to use the single-ballot box system.

4.3 Elected representatives

Honiara City Council has 20 councillors: 12 elected councillors (each representing a ward), four members appointed by the minister, the three members of parliament who represent Honiara, and the premier of Guadalcanal province (the island on which Honiara sits).

The 12 elected councillors are elected through a ward voting system on a first-past-the-post basis for a four-year term. The mayor is elected by and from the full 20 councillors. The mayor may be removed by resolution passed by an absolute majority of council members, but not within 18 months of appointment. Each of the 12 council wards has a ward advisory committee of local citizens to represent sub-ward areas, advise the elected councillor on local issues and make recommendations on community/individual applications for ward development grant monies allocated by the council.

4.4 Women's representation

In 2014 the minister appointed one woman councillor to Honiara City Council, who was nominated by the Solomon Islands Council for Women. This is up from none following the 2006 and 2010 elections. At the 2014 provincial elections, 1.9% of councillors were female (two out of 107 provincial council members). Both Honiara City Council and provincial councils undertake gender-based budgeting, and additionally, since 2010, core provincial and council officers have received gender-based training. Since then, women's divisions have been set up.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement

There is no specific legislation governing community consultation.

5.2 Implementation

Community engagement in the local decision-making process is mostly through ward committees, which are intended to provide two-way feedback via the ward councillor. In practice these committees meet rarely. Discussion with student groups has taken place and various women's groups have sought and been granted extra space in the national market to promote products and ideas.

5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

There is information-sharing through the Honiara City Council and provincial councils' websites, providing citizens with better access to information and promoting greater accountability.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There is no association of local government in the Solomon Islands. At the national level, however, the premiers and CEOs of the nine provinces hold an annual conference to discuss sub-national issues of mutual interest and interaction with national government. The gathering includes the lord mayor and CEO of Honiara as participating



Table 41.1b Women councillors and mayors following the last three local elections

Election	2006		2010		2014	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
All councillors						
All female councillors	0	0	0	0	3	2.4
All Male councillors	16	100.0	16	100.0	124	97.6
Total councillors	16	100.0	16	100.0	127	100.0
Honiara City (HC) councillors	#	%	#	%	#	%
Female HC councillors	0	0	0	0	1	5.0
Male HC councillors	20	100.0	20	100.0	19	95.0
Total mayors	20	100.0	20	100.0	20	100.0
Provincial (P) councillors						
Female (P) councillors	na	na	na	na	2	1.9
Male (P) councillors	na	na	na	na	105	98.1
Total (P) councillors	na	100.0	na	100.0	107	100.0
All mayors/chairperson						
All female mayors/chairpersons	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
All male mayors/chairpersons	10	100.0	10	100.0	10	100.0
Total mayors/chairpersons	10	100.0	10	100.0	10	100.0
City mayor (Honiara)						
Female mayors	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Male mayors	1	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0
Total mayors	1	100.0	1	100.0	1	100.0
Provincial chairpersons						
Female provincial chairpersons	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	.0.0
Male provincial chairpersons	9	100.0	9	100.0	9	100.0
Total provincial chairpersons	9	100.0	9	100.0	9	100.0

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs correspondence with CLGF^{41.3a}

members. This is in recognition of the fact that the capital city has a pivotal role as the gateway to the Solomon Islands, as well as having a larger population than most provinces and a population drawn from across the provinces.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The HCA allows the Minister for Home Affairs to appoint four out of Honiara's 20 council members. The three members of parliament who represent Honiara and the premier of Guadalcanal province are also ex-officio council members. These arrangements allow for involvement of national and provincial government representatives in council decision-making. Honiara City Council is often asked for its views on national policy and legislative initiatives. Recent capacity-building efforts have enabled it to respond to these requests and promote local government interests through engagement with other agencies. While there are no formal mechanisms for liaison with the Ministry

for Home Affairs, the council endeavours to keep the ministry informed of key policy developments. Formal interaction also occurs where ministerial approval is required for proposed council activities.

Table 41.2a Aggregate income and expenditure for local government 2015/16

Income	SB\$m	Expenditure	SB\$m
Centre-local transfers		Administration	
Fixed service grants	-57.0	Staff	na
Provincial council development grants	-50.0	Property	na
		Other	na
Locally raised revenue		Services	
Property taxes	na	Water	na
Licences and fees	na	Road maintenance	na
Other	na	Other	na
TOTAL INCOME	-107.0	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	-107.0

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs communication with CLGF^{41.9}

Table 41.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2015/16

	2013/14 SB\$m	2015/16 SB\$m
Total government expenditure	na	4,382.8
Total local government expenditure	na	107.0
Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure	1.8%	2.4%

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs communication with CLGF ^{41.9}

Nevertheless, a strategy for local revenue collection has been developed and training is conducted for all revenue collectors. The most common source of internal revenue for provincial governments is basic rates; these vary across the provinces and apply at different tariffs to employed and unemployed citizens. The PGA also lists other revenue (eg rent, grants from consolidated revenue, interest on investments) which could in principle be available to provincial assemblies and Honiara City Council.

9.3 Transfers

9.3.1 Transfers to Honiara City Council:

Specific-purpose grants and an unconditional main service grant provide around one-third of all council revenue. Transfers should be paid monthly, but in practice are usually paid on a quarterly basis by national government. The amount received in 2011 was approximately US\$1.7m.

9.3.2 Transfers to provincial councils:

Provincial governments have access to four different sources of external and internal funds for financing their basic services and capital development initiatives: service grants (external), the Provincial Capacity Development Fund (PCDF), national capital project funding, and the Rural Constitutional Development Fund (RCDF). Funds are received from national government on a quarterly basis, upon submission of satisfactory accounts for the previous quarter. The service grants finance the operational costs of the provincial governments: salaries, road maintenance, libraries and provincial shipping. Of the funding available, 20% is equally divided between all provinces, while the other 80% is allocated according to the size of the population in each province. The RCDF is administered by the Ministry of Rural Development with tight control by members of parliament. The funding goes directly to the ward development committees, bypassing the provincial governments' existing institutions and is handled by the constituency development officer. This approach can give rise to duplication of institutions and activities. The total funding spent through the RDCF in 2011 was SB\$103m. The RDCF is not subject to the same monitoring and evaluation arrangements as the PCDF.

9.4 Loans

Before the Public Finance and Management Act (PFM) 2013, Section 40 of the PGA allowed local governments to borrow, but only with the approval of the Minister of Provincial Government. Since the enactment of the PFM Act 2013 the pre-conditions have been strengthened. Now, before any local or provincial government can borrow they have to meet the following three criteria: a clean audit report, no PAYE arrears and no National Provident Fund NPF arrears.

9.5 Local authority staff

9.5.1 Honiara City Council staff: The chief executive officer, known as the city clerk, is responsible for staffing decisions and has the power to recruit, discipline and dismiss. The council employs staff directly, but others can be seconded from national government agencies from time to time, mostly to senior specialist positions. The HCA allows councils to establish an employment board to advise on conditions of employment for directly appointed council staff. HCC's staffing structure is a chief executive officer supported by divisional heads based on core operational functions of the council: executive administration and human resources, corporate services, finance, health, education, law enforcement, planning and building, markets, youth, sport and women's development, and works. The city council pays the allowances of its elected representatives and salaries of its directly employed officers. Staff seconded to the city council are paid by national government.

9.5.1 Provincial government staff: Both elected representatives and seconded staff are paid by national government whilst directly employed staff are paid by the provincial government. The premiere is a full-time position with salary and other entitlements determined by the parliamentary committee. The other 11 elected councillors meet when required and receive allowances and entitlements determined by the Minister for Home Affairs.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

Honiara City Council is responsible for the delivery of a wide and diverse range of services in the nation's capital as specified in the HCA. Both Honiara City Council and the provincial council can seek partnership with NGOs or the private sector to finance and deliver infrastructure development. The city council has sole responsibility for trade, business licences and waste management, but shares responsibility with the provincial and national governments for the regulation and conservation of the environment, public roads maintenance, drainage, education and medical services. The HCA also provides that additional functions under specified national legislation may be transferred to the council. Additional functions can be conferred directly by other national legislation. Provincial governments are mandated under Schedule 5 of the PGA to provide services in the following areas:

- trade and industry: employment, cooperatives, local trades and industries
- cultural and environmental matters: museums, libraries, local languages, arts and crafts, sports and other cultural and recreational activities
- transport: shipping and harbours, road transport, aerodromes
- agriculture and fishing
- health: medical services, public health
- welfare and other social services
- housing
- information: newspaper and other information services, statistics
- forestry
- education: kindergartens, primary schools, provincial secondary schools and community education
- electricity: supply of electricity outside supply areas (under the Electricity Act)
- tourism
- corporate or statutory bodies.

10.2 ICT use in service delivery

Information provided by councils on services via their websites and social media has improved service delivery to citizens.

10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The government's National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016-2035 provides a national vision for improving the social and economic livelihood of all Solomon Islanders, and its goals mirror many of the SDGs.



Implementation is guided by the following five long-term objectives:

- sustained, inclusive economic growth
- poverty alleviated across the whole of the Solomon Islands, basic needs addressed, food security improved, and benefits of development more equitably distributed
- all Solomon Islanders to have access to quality health and education
- resilient and environmentally sustainable development with effective disaster risk management, response and recovery
- a unified nation with stable and effective governance and public order.

Local planning and service delivery is aligned to national planning and then executed through the Ministry of Provincial Government. Local governments feed into national reporting mechanisms by reporting back to their responsible ministries: the Ministry of Provincial Government for provincial government, and the Ministry of Home Affairs for Honiara City Council. Local governments are participating in a number of activities which directly or indirectly contribute to achieving the SDGs – for example, promoting quality education by building classrooms for local communities.

REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

- 41.1a National government portal www.pmc.gov.sb
- 41.1b Women in national parliaments. Inter-Parliamentary Union www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm
- 41.2a Constitution of Solomon Islands www.parliament.gov.sb/files/business&procedure/constitution.htm
- 41.2b Local Government Act 1996 www.clg.uts.edu.au/pdfs/SolomonsLocalGovernmentAct.pdf
- 41.2c The Provincial Government Act 1996 www.parliament.gov.sb/files/legislation/Acts/1996/TheProvincialGovernmentACT1996.pdf
- 41.2d Honiara City Act 1999 www.parliament.gov.sb/files/legislation/Acts/1999/THEHONIARACITYACT1999.pdf
- 41.2e Town and Country Planning Act 1997 www.clg.uts.edu.au/pdfs/SolomonIs-TownandCountryPlanningAct.pdf
- 41.3a 2009 Census www.mof.gov.sb/Libraries/Statistics/2011_06_-_Report_on_2009_Population_Housing_Census.sflb.ashx
- 41.3b Projected population by province 2010-2015 www.statistics.gov.sb/statistics/social-statistics/population/40-projected-population-by-province-2010-2025
- 41.4 Solomon Islands Electoral Commission www.siec.gov.sb
- 41.5 No reference for this section
- 41.6 No reference for this section
- 41.7 No reference for this section
- 41.8 No reference for this section
- 41.9 Based on figures in Table 2a and SB\$4,382.8 for total government expenditure in 2016 (page 9) www.solomonchamber.com.sb/media/1308/budget-strategy-outlook-vol1.pdf
- 41.10 National Development Strategy 2016-2035 www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cobp-sol-2017-2019-ld-01.pdf
- 41.11a UN statistics surface area <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf>
- 41.11b Commonwealth Local Government knowledge hub www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub
- 41.11c UNDP HDR Solomon Islands profile <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLB>

Annex 41a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in the Solomon Islands

Services	Delivering authority			Remarks
	National government	Provincial governments	Honiara City Council	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION				
Police	■		■	
Fire protection	■			
Civil protection	■			
Criminal justice	■			
Civil status register	■			
Statistical office	■	■		
Electoral register	■			
EDUCATION				
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)		■		
Primary		■		
Secondary		■		
Vocational and technical				
Higher education	■			
Adult education		■		
SOCIAL WELFARE				
Family welfare services		■		
Welfare homes		■		
Social security	■	■		
PUBLIC HEALTH				
Primary care		■	■	
Hospitals	■	■		
Health protection		■	■	
HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING				
Housing		■		
Town planning			■	
Regional planning		■		
TRANSPORT				
Roads	■	■		
Transport		■		
Urban roads		■	■	
Urban rail	na			
Ports		■		
Airports		■		
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION				
Water and sanitation	■	■	■	
Refuse collection and disposal		■	■	
Cemeteries and crematoria		■	■	
Slaughterhouses				
Environmental protection	■	■	■	
Consumer protection	■	■		
CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS				
Theatres and concerts		■		
Museums and libraries		■		
Parks and open spaces		■	■	
Sports and leisure facilities		■		
Religious facilities				
UTILITIES				
Gas services				
District heating				
Water supply	■	■	■	
Electricity		■		
ECONOMIC				
Agriculture, forests and fisheries		■		
Local economic development/promotion	■	■	■	
Trade and industry	■	■		
Tourism	■	■	■	

■ sole responsibility service ■ joint responsibility service ■ discretionary service